Pamphlet
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"The King's Business" Series. No. 14.

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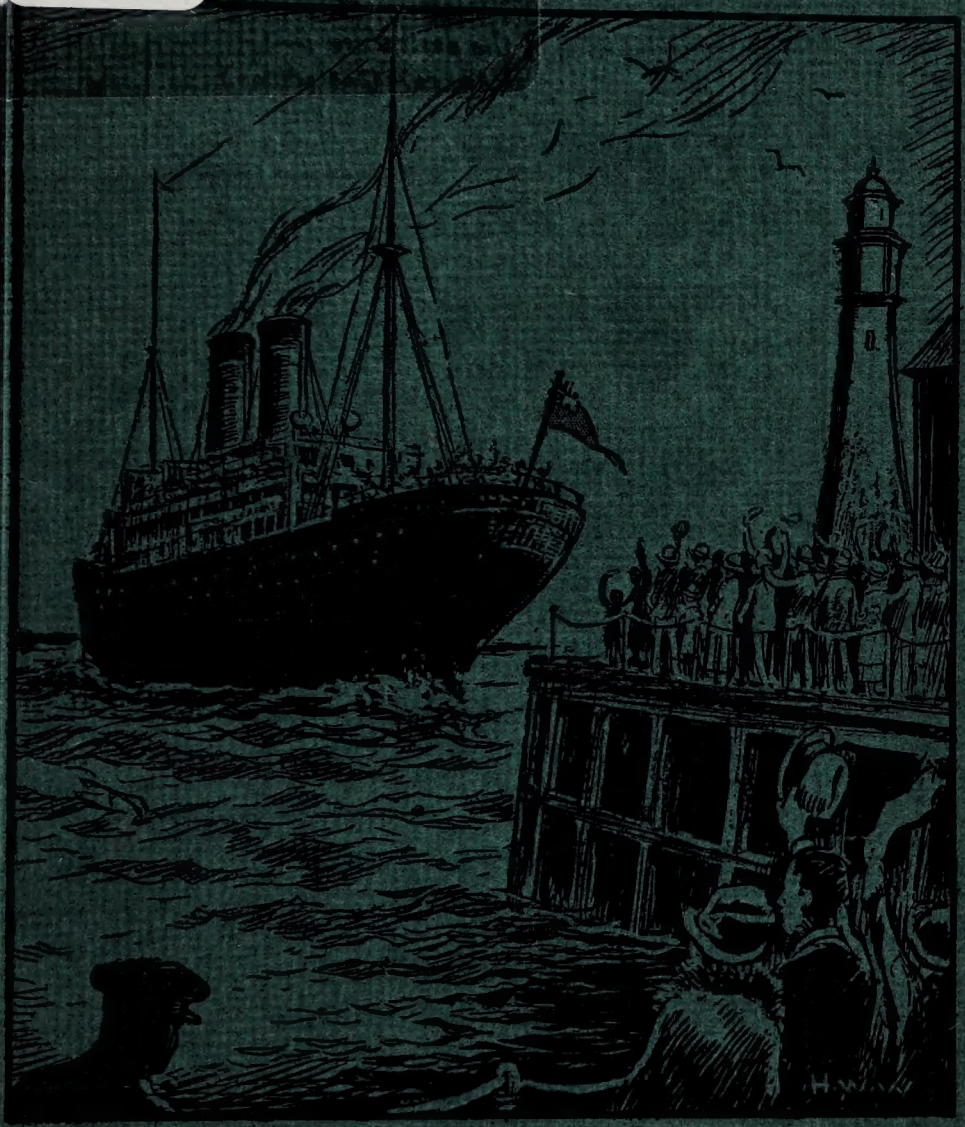

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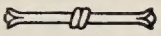
CARAVANNING THROUGH PRAIRIE AND MOUNTAIN IN CANADA.



ONE sees posters in almost every town in England: "More people wanted to settle on the land in Canada; you can go for £2." And those of us who have sailed for seven years, each spring, have seen the crowded ships leaving Liverpool.

On an average, in the spring of 1926 fifty, and in 1927 seventy-five, Church of England families went to each Western diocese, and many more went out in the spring of 1928. But how many people in Great Britain ever think about these splendid pioneers, or know what they have to do when they arrive?

I want to tell you about some who do remember them, and go and visit them and cheer them up in their loneliness and homesickness.

Imagine you are a gipsy, and come with us in one of our Ford Sunday School Mission caravans.

We sleep in our vans, and take a cooking-stove, and camp wherever we happen to be when night comes on. We take Bible pictures on the life of our Lord, and Sunday school books, so that we can start Sunday schools

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and leave the pictures and books with parents, who carry them on. Those families who are too scattered to get to school can join the Sunday School by Post, and have Bible and Church lessons sent by post, which the children read in their homes, answering questions and sending them in monthly to be corrected by the secretary.

We find the children who have not been baptized, and send the names to the nearest clergyman. Where there are no clergy we are also allowed by the Bishops in Western Canada to take services for parents. We can also prepare the way for the clergy, by teaching young parents who have never been to Church or had any Christian teaching, for they often do not know what to do at a service. Others who have not been to Holy Communion for years like time for preparation; and we can give an address of one of the parents who can put up a notice in the post office of a Celebration a week before the clergyman visits the district. One mother told me she had not been able to get to Holy Communion for twenty-five years, and even young men of over twenty have heard the Gospel message from us for the first time. The visiting of lonely mothers and cheering them up is quite a mission in itself. We can always find somebody, after we have visited a settlement, who will collect the children and young people for baptism when a clergyman is able to come round, and in this way we can spare the time and energy of the few and very overworked rural clergy in the West of Canada.

The girls who go in the caravans receive no salary. One or two have given up a salary of £200 a year to go out and do honorary work. Some of us pay our own travelling expenses; for those who cannot, money

is raised in the Western Canada Caravan Fund, which is also used to buy Ford caravans, each costing £325. The running expenses are raised by the Western dioceses in Canada.

There are eight caravans, and two girls go with each van—a driver who can do her own repairs, and a trained teacher. Many more caravans and workers are needed.

We go across the prairie, with the golden wheat and blue sky stretching as far as the eye can see, or in the northern parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, among bush and through bog, or over mountains in British Columbia, with their snow-capped peaks, lakes, and wonderful forests, mines, and orchards with lovely red apples and beautiful peaches, pears, and apricots.

Now we will take you over some of the roads to visit the new settlers. On the prairie the roads in the new settlements are made by a Government grader, very much like a plough, which scoops out two or three feet of loose sods and earth and hurls them into the middle, leaving a deep ditch on each side. There are no broken stones or steam-rollers; the cars have to roll down the loose mass, which generally leaves two deep ruts. On a wet day the earth becomes like glue, and you skid from side to side, even with chains, and often land in the ditch, which is full of mud and water. We go to a farm and ask the farmer to pull us out with his team of horses, which he gladly does and charges nothing; he is so pleased to see that the old Church has not really forgotten him and his wife and children. In the bush country there are stumps of trees to drive over, a road just cleared, and a bog with small trees or logs laid across.

I have had the back axle buried in a mud-hole and been over all four hubs in mud, and had to dig out each wheel and get planks and sit on the end and jack the car up all round, wading about in mud and water well over the top of my rubber boots, to get to lonely settlers in Northern Manitoba, who had had all their grain washed out in June, 1925, the worst flood known for twenty years. They were so poor we had to ask the Red Cross to send them clothes, as they had no warm clothes for the winter. We often had to leave the caravan and walk as we were visiting in the low meadowland, and although the summer was very hot, the land was at a lower level, and the lakes having overflowed in June, a great deal of the land was boggy all summer. One day we walked twenty miles and got lost at night, one lonely mother after another sending us on to somebody else, saying how pleased everybody would be to see us, and we had not the heart to leave them out. It got dark and we could not see the path. I remembered that we had visited a farm earlier in the day in the west, so we went west, through bog over our knees and long grass with charred stumps of trees, which we fell over; there had been a forest fire. At last we heard a cow-bell and a dog barking, and went in the direction of the sounds, and found the farm after midnight. We were very wet; the farmer's wife said we might sleep in the kitchen. As my companion tried to go to sleep she said she felt as if she "had had forty stripes save one."

In the Lonely Lake district we went with the postman in a flat-bottomed boat, drawn by a horse, through the water and rushes; all were glad to see us, including the Icelanders.

Come with us in the mountains in the dioceses of Cariboo and Kootenay, in British Columbia (one the size of England, the other as large as Great Britain). To visit one family from England we rose 1,000-ft. in one and a half miles. Another day we drove along a road with a rock on one side and an 800-ft. drop into the lake on the other side. One corner I thought we could not get round, but found that I could very slowly creep round with the Ford truck. Other corners I had to back up and get round in the second turn; for twelve miles you could not pass another car; if you did meet another car you had to back up.

Over the Cascade highway we rose from 1,000-ft. to 5,400-ft. in fifteen miles. For three weeks we had a temperature of 100 degrees to 102 degrees in the shade, and one day 110 degrees, and that day we walked fifteen miles up a mountain to visit two English families.

The people who live in the mountains are very scattered and lonely. One day we went fifty miles and only visited two families. A mother wrote and said: "Do come and visit me. I live nine miles from my nearest neighbour, whom I see once a year when the Fraser River freezes over. My children have never been baptized, and have not had any Bible teaching." I put their names down on the Sunday School by Post, and a clergyman went 200 miles to baptize the children.

To get to more lonely settlers we drove along a road where you could not pass anything for eighteen miles except in two places, rocks on one side and a precipice on the other—365 very bad corners in the eighteen miles.

Great Shortage of Men and Money.

A sad father wrote to the Bishop of Brandon (Manitoba), saying he and his wife and the other homesteaders had come out from England fifteen years ago and had never had a service taken by any minister of any church, and their little girl had died and there was nobody to take the funeral. "I think," said the father to the Bishop, "that the members of the Church of England who are more fortunate and have services will feel very sad at the last day, when God reveals to them the spiritual destitution of my wife and myself and the other homesteaders, who have been up in the north of the province for fifteen years without a service." What could the Bishop do? He neither had men nor money, but he sent us with the Sunday School Mission caravan.

And this is what we found. Two rural deaneries, each 6,000 miles square; one clergyman in priest's Orders, with a large town parish, and in the other deanery, the same size, one deacon; that means one clergyman in priest's Orders for 16,000 square miles.

In one district they had never had a Church of England service since they came, fifteen years ago. A man who had tried to start a Sunday school told us that one day he collected fifty adults and children in the school and asked how many had ever been to Sunday school or service before, and was told only twelve. He also said two children had gone home after he had sung some hymns, and told their father that the superintendent of the Sunday school was swearing because he had said Christ's Name. Another day, in visiting in Alberta, I found a woman who had played the organ in a village church in Kent; she found

she was fifty miles from any service, and so asked her husband to drive her a hundred miles on Sunday, but the weather got so hot, and the husband was clearing and breaking land during the week, it would have been cruel to take their horses a hundred miles on Sunday. So she said, "I cannot go now, and I do feel so homesick on Sundays," and broke down and cried.

We met an old Yorkshireman who came out nineteen years ago, and left his wife the first winter with 25 cents (1s.) to keep herself and three children while he went to earn more money by going into a lumber camp. The mother darned the bachelors' stockings and made money in different ways, and now he and his sons have 1,900 acres. He told us he had been nineteen years without a service, and the only place of worship now within reach was nonconformist.

The Cariboo diocese, in British Columbia, is the size of England. In 1927 there were only eleven clergy, three of whom were on furlough; the Kootenay diocese, the size of Great Britain, in 1927 had thirty clergy. Far more men are needed. Many of them on the prairie have parishes covering an area of 2,000 square miles, and with eleven points for services; and in the summer they go eighty miles and take four services. One clergyman in British Columbia has not had a holiday for twenty years. Many have broken down through overwork and thinking of the many who are still left without the sacraments, besides the strain of travelling in all weathers on the prairie, intense cold, forty degrees below zero, snow storms, great heat in summer, and in the mountains looking out for rocks on the roads, cars coming round corners, passing cars on the edge of a precipice—you never know if the edge will not give way. Also there is

the difficulty of getting the funds; it all depends on the crops; if they fail it is very difficult to get money. Often in lumbering and mining districts the population fluctuates. In one place three years ago there were 5,000 people working in a copper mine; now there is only one old man, a nice church, but nobody to go to it. In other places lumber-mills have closed down. Forest fires are sometimes the cause, numbers of poles and valuable timber being burnt every summer. As there are no endowments, the settlers cannot have a service unless they can raise the money for a clergyman and build the church. The Missionary Societies, and especially the S.P.G., give grants, but there is not nearly enough money to help all these newly settled districts. How can a man give much who is clearing land and blowing out stumps at great cost, building his house, buying his horses and machinery, and waiting for three years till he can get any real return from his farm and grain? He has to keep his wife and children. One man on a fruit ranch has had to wait six years for his apple trees to bear; and then in British Columbia in October, 1926, he was receiving 35 cents (=1s. 6d.) for a 40-lb. box of the best eating apples, and giving his peaches to the pigs because he could not sell them. How is he going to raise £250 or £300 a year for a clergyman and build a church? If they have no clergyman they are left with nobody to take weddings or funerals or baptize their children.

When they have been out four or five years, those who are getting on well, help in a wonderful way—put up their churches, all free labour. I have heard the following conversation between a farmer and his wife; the wife asked her husband to go to a farm sale and buy her a new table, for, she said, "the table on

which we have our meals is so shaky it may give way any time." The farmer said he could not afford to buy a table, but on Sunday he and his wife each put in the plate 25 cents (1s. each), besides giving each week in the freewill envelopes. The people were also raising money to finish their church. All these people have left their old parish churches and endowments, which we enjoy, to go out as pioneers. Surely we ought to help them? They send us wheat and fruit, &c.; what are we sending them?

There is also the difficulty of numbers; so often in the settlements we visit there are just a few Church of England people, the others are Roman Catholic, Greek Church, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and all sorts of strange sects—Holy Rollers, Russellites, Two-by-Twos, Mormons, &c. There are also sixty different nationalities represented in the West; all the countries in Europe have some representatives, and in British Columbia there are also Chinese, Japanese, and Hindus.

It is a meeting-place of nations; such a wonderful opportunity for missionary work, but so few Church of England people in each district to support a church and clergyman. One finds the members of other Churches gladly attend the services, and often help with the finance.

Great Need for Religious Teaching.

The saddest part of our visits to the homes of the new settlers is to listen to the stories of the fathers and mothers describing their great difficulties in training their children in Christian principles for the following reasons :—

(*a*) No Bible teaching in the day schools.

In the three prairie provinces, Bible teaching can be given in the last half-hour if the local trustees agree; but they generally do not, as they belong to different Churches and sects.

I went into 101 day schools in Alberta and only found five that had any Bible teaching.

In British Columbia it is against the law to give Bible lessons in school hours.

(*b*) Many rural districts have no Sunday schools. The clergy, wherever there are any, have such large districts that it is impossible for them to teach the children on Sunday, on account of the distances and numbers of services for the adults.

(*c*) The mothers are so busy from early morning till late at night, and Sunday is often the busiest day, as people visit; and the struggle to make ends meet in the early pioneer days is very great; the feeding and clothing of the children is quite a problem; also there is no real privacy in these small houses, for there are so few rooms. The settler's first shack is generally very small. I once saw five children sleeping in one bed, and a big brother and sister on the floor, and I never found out where the father and mother slept. It is also quite impossible for them to get Bible pictures and books in out-of-the-way places. It seems quite impossible for these busy mothers to teach their children without the Church's help. These busy mothers often tell me they fall asleep at night trying to say their prayers. The result is very sad. In all the four Western Provinces I have found English-speaking children only knowing God's Name as a swear-word. We are also finding young parents who have grown up in the West who have had no Christian teaching, and have never been baptized, and are sending their children

out to steal. They are brought up by the police and punished; nobody wishes to employ them. The judges of the juvenile courts say that crime increases every year, the age of the offenders being twenty-three and under.

After a lesson on the life of Christ in a gold-mining town in British Columbia, in a church which had been closed for four years because no men or money had been sent from England, we heard the following:—

Little girl, aged four: "I think teacher was swearing this morning."

"Oh, no," said a little girl of five.

"Well," said the child of four, "she said 'Jesus Christ,' and that is what mother always says when she is angry."

A girl, aged fourteen, going to a high school in Saskatchewan, put this in her English history examination paper: "When William the Conqueror came to England he found no code of laws, so he drew up the Ten Commandments." In British Columbia we found a large family; the mother told us she had not been to church for twelve years. Three of her children were called Faith, Hope, and Charity, but I am afraid their names did not help them very much; they had never had any Bible teaching, and had no idea of any Christian principles and had never been baptized.

Besides lack of teaching and of grounding in the Faith, these children come across very strange ideas, the teaching of numbers of odd sects. They go to the Holy Roller meetings for amusement; they enjoy watching them get more and more excited, and at last rolling on the floor. A young teacher described how she had attended one of these services, as there was no other. She said: "I sat at the back. The Holy Roller minister said, 'Will all those who

are saved stand up.' " She said, "I did not stand. Then the minister pointed to me and said, 'There seems to be only one dead soul in the congregation; let us weep over the dead soul.' Everybody, including the minister, pulled out a large handkerchief." As the girl went out, the minister said, "May the dead soul be damned for evermore." I was told by a doctor at a mental home that after the Holy Roller mass meetings he always had a number of cases of religious mania. One man was brought in who said he had had a vision from God to tell him to put his wife and children into the barn, lock it up, and set fire to it, but he was taken away just in time.

The Mormons in southern Alberta are getting hold of the young people in their Sunday schools. Once we arrived in a settlement a fortnight too late; a Mormon had started a Sunday school, and even the Church of England mothers had allowed their children to go, because there was no other Sunday school.

There are also the Bolshevists, who told us there was no God, and if we sent Bible lessons to their children they would burn them. They have started a Sunday school, at which they train their children each Sunday to march past a picture of our Lord and spit at it. The Russian and Finn children are in many places going to school with the British children, and owing to their home training are teaching them to steal and lie. One provincial policeman begged me to go and teach all the children in a school district, not only the English children, as he told me that it was often said there was only one commandment kept, and that was, "Thou shalt not be found with the stuff." As long as the children get away with the stolen goods, they were praised; if not, they were

scolded by their parents. Much of this is due to the treatment in the past of the Russian peasants. They have been down-trodden and allowed no education; what they made was taken from them by those above them; they are centuries behind in civilization. This treatment has encouraged dishonesty and untruthfulness, and when you consider the heredity and environment of the children, you can understand that it is hard for them to be honest and truthful, and the British children often learn bad habits and copy these other children.

The International Bible Students, or Russellites, are also very active in the out-of-the-way places, giving away free literature. I had a discussion with one, who told me the Archbishop of Canterbury was no good because he sat in the House of Lords, and that the Church of England clergy were either heretics or criminals. In their Bible commentary they seemed even to have altered the meaning of our Lord's words on the Cross to the dying thief by altering the punctuation.

The Ruthenian children from Central Europe were not being looked after in many places by the Greek Church, and were glad to be taught by us, as they all learn English in school. They have a very low moral standard, and yet in many cases go to school with English children. A district nurse told me that when the Ruthenian woman died whom she was nursing, the husband said he "missed his wife dreadfully, more than if he had lost the best cow on his farm." The other day, in Northern Manitoba, three Ruthenian boys were playing; one, aged eight, made a great noise; two boys, aged sixteen and seventeen, asked him to stop. For mischief he made more noise; the two big boys took him by the heels and dashed his head against a house and killed him.

In British Columbia there is a settlement of Russians called Dukhobors, so called because of their religion. Peter Verigin, their leader, thought the young men ought to get married, so he told the young men to run a race and catch a girl; they did not like the girls they caught, so were allowed to change once. Then their leader said, "Now you are married." These people were told they need not keep the Canadian law, which interfered with their religious ideas, as long as they lived by themselves in a community. Now their leader is dead they are breaking away from the community. Near this settlement we found sixteen English-speaking children going to school with forty Dukhobors. What conflicting ideas our British children must get mixing with people of all sorts of religious ideas, and people from Central Europe who seem centuries behind us in civilization. How difficult it is for busy lumbermen and their wives far away in the forest, or miners' children in mining settlements, with all sorts of characters working in the mine, or busy farmers clearing land, fruit ranchers and cattle ranchers, whose wives work so hard, and often have no service or Sunday school, to cope with the training of these young people, who come across so many temptations. It is hard for these parents to teach their children to be honest, truthful, moral, and good members of the Church and citizens of the Empire. Surely the Church ought to do more than she has in the past to help them.

Western Canada is the meeting-place of nations; it is in a wonderful strategic position between East and West. Many of the people go back to their own countries, especially the Eastern nations, and would be splendid missionaries to their own people, if there was

a strong Christian influence all round them in Western Canada. The Chinese and Japanese have been encouraged to come to help with railways and clearing land, and are now fruit-farming in British Columbia and managing laundries; the Japanese are fishing on the coast, and helping to can salmon and fruit. In the towns the Chinese often have gambling dens and sell drugs.

The Russians and others cannot be looked after by their own Church, and are ready and anxious to be taught by us, if only we had clergy and teachers and money to save them from the Communists. What are a few clergy and sixteen girls in eight Sunday school caravans for these dioceses the size of England, many nearly twice the size?

We go to all nationalities and all creeds, and all are ready to be taught. The lonely mothers give us such a wonderful welcome and, I believe, would share their last crust with us. They often say, "It is so nice to see a woman from the Old Country." Some have to go to mental homes through loneliness and overwork. The fathers help us in every way they can. They do not want their children to grow up without Christian teaching. They pull us out of mud-holes, and make maps of the district for us, and tell us to take care on dangerous roads, because we come to cheer them and their wives and to teach their children. The children are so easy to teach; they seem to be longing for something more than secular education, which, without Christian teaching, only seems to make them into clever young rogues. They have little play, as they ride three miles to school, and in consolidated school districts they are sometimes driven in a van nine miles to school. They always help to round in the cattle in summer-

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The following books on our own people overseas are recommended for further reading:—

GENERAL.

THROUGH WESTERN CANADA IN A CARAVAN. F. H. Eya Hasell. 1925. (*2nd edition.*) S.P.G. 3/6 (by post 4/-).

A PARSON ACROSS THE ROCKIES. Christopher E. Turner. 1927. (*2nd edition.*) S.P.G. 1/- (by post 1/2).

A PARSON IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH. C. H. S. Matthews. 1926. S.P.G. 2/6 (by post 2/10).

OUR OWN PEOPLE IN SOUTH AFRICA. Lady Phyllis Ponsonby. 1927. S.P.G. 1/- (by post 1/2).

THE SOUTH AFRICANS. S. G. Millin. 1926. Constable. 7/6 (by post 8/-).

OUR CHURCH'S YOUNGEST DAUGHTER. (A sketch of the Anglican Church in India.) Bishop Eyre Chatterton. 1928. S.P.G. 1/- (by post 1/2).

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN SOUTH AMERICA. Bishop Every. 1915. S.P.C.K. 2/6 (by post 2/9).

THE LONELY ISLAND. R. A. Rogers. (Tristan da Cunha.) 1926. George Allen and Unwin. 7/6 (by post 8/-).

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

PRAIRIE AND BUSH. Rosamund Essex. (Canada and Australia.) 1926. S.P.G. 9d. net (by post 11d.).

ON DISTANT TRAILS. H. R. Henrich and H. P. Thompson. (Canada and Australia.) 1926. S.P.G. 9d. net (by post 10d.).

MEN WHO BLAZED THE TRAIL. M. H. Debenham. (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.) 1926. S.P.G. 1/- (by post 1/2).

The above-named books can be obtained from

S.P.G. Office, 15 Tufton Street, Westminster, S.W. 1.